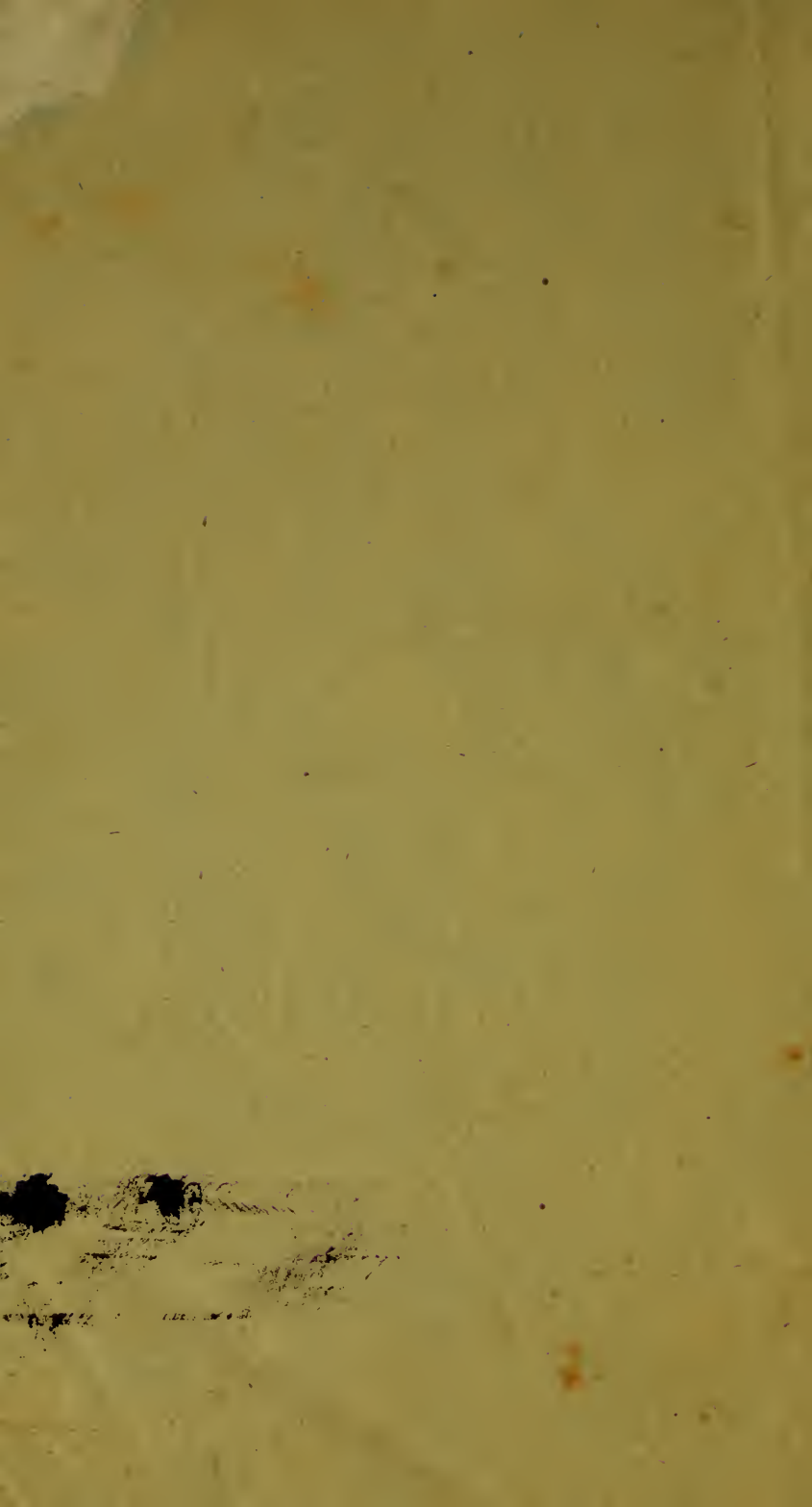


MOTHER.



The Death of a Mother:

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS,

SABBATH, AUGUST 2, 1857.

By WILLIAM W. PATTON.

CHICAGO:

STEAM PRESSES OF SCRIPPS, BROSS & SPEARS, 45 CLARK STREET.

1857.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

THE DEATH OF A MOTHER.

PSALM XXXV. 14.

“I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.”

THERE is no sound in the English language, if we except that which expresses the name of our Savior, which falls upon the ear with so sweet and touching a cadence as the word MOTHER. From the earliest hours of dependent and affectionate childhood to the last moments of expiring age, it is, of all words which relate to earth, the most precious, retaining its charm through every change of life, and breathing music into the very ear of death. The face upon which our eyes first learned to look with love in this world, remains fixed in memory—as it were daguerreotyped on the heart—until the pulse ceases to beat and we pass to a world where the relationships of time merge in those of eternity.

This feeling of interest and affection is the result of a divine constitution. God ordained that every human being, subsequent to the first created pair, should have a mother. Not even “the man Christ Jesus” was exempt from this law of entrance into mortal life.

Though he acknowledged no father but God, he was the son of a virgin, and learned in childhood to lisp the precious name of MOTHER! This divine arrangement was intended to secure numerous and important ends, through the mutual love of mother and child. It is, therefore, an interesting study to inquire into the facts connected with this phase of the family.

First, then, I remark, THAT THE RELATION OF A MOTHER TO A CHILD IS PECULIAR. It is based upon the physical fact of birth. The child derives its being from its mother, and is emphatically "bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh." She has borne the child with all that special suffering which, in every language under heaven, has been made the figure of the most intense agony. At the risk, and sometimes at the expense, of the mother's life, does every child enter the world. This constitutes a link between the two, such as binds in no other relation. There can be no approximation of any other person, in the eyes of a mother, to her own child. There can be no substitute, on the other hand, in the eyes of a child, for a mother. They are peculiarly one, as trunk and branch are one, as the sun and its light are one. The mother never forgets that her children are her offspring, with her blood in their veins, her life in their heart.

Then follows the fact of early, protracted, self-denying and all-embracing care. The new born babe,

utterly helpless, is cast upon the care of the mother, who from that moment assumes a responsibility which only maternal love could sustain, and enters upon long years of labor and sacrifice. By day and by night, in health and in illness, without intermission save in an anxious sleep which the slightest disturbance ends, does the mother wait upon the wants of her little one. To guard it from harm and to promote its happiness, is the one thought ever present in her mind, consciously cherished during the greater portion of the time, and abiding in the depths of her heart even when, for brief periods, she is drawn to other duties. No person but herself sustains this relation of perpetual care, to ward off actual and possible harm, to supply every bodily want, to minister comfort in the many but brief griefs of childhood, and to be a continual sunshine around the young plant. God thought of this maternal sympathy, when he said lovingly to his people, "Then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees; as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And the Bible also presents a very natural and affecting illustration in the case of the little son of the Shunammite woman, who, being taken ill, as he watched the reapers, cried out, "My head! my head;" upon which the father said, "Carry him to his mother;" and we read that "he sat on her knees

till noon, and then died." Yes, it is the mother whose all-embracing care is at hand in every emergency, and who may be said to live for her child.

Then we must add the fact, that to the mother is committed the earliest and most important instruction and training of the child. It is she who has under sole charge the tender mind in its most susceptible stage, when the deepest impressions are made of thought and feeling, and the first directions are given to the will. Solomon, even from the throne, looked back to the instruction which he had received from his mother; for in the book of Proverbs we find such sentences as these frequently recurring: "My son, forsake not the law of thy mother;" "I was tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother;" "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." And so every man, who has been blessed with a faithful and pious mother, will remember that his earliest lessons were learned in his mother's lap, and that from her lips and kneeling by her side, he was taught to pronounce the name of God and to articulate the words of prayer. No other person has that full authority, deep interest, constant access and perpetual presence, which make a mother's instructions the very atmosphere in which the child moves and breathes. The infantile years of life, which are, beyond doubt, the forming period of character, are placed at her sole

disposal, so that in no untrue sense she may be said to be the mother of the child in soul and body alike.

Secondly, we should notice the fact, that FROM THIS PECULIAR RELATION RESULTS AN ANSWERING MUTUAL LOVE BETWEEN THE MOTHER AND THE CHILD. This love is, on both sides, partly blind and instinctive, and partly intelligent and cultivated. God has implanted, even in brutes, a strong affection for their offspring, at least during the period in which the latter need protection. The human mother has this passion developed permanently in its highest form. The first sight of her new born babe is attended with a gush of feeling such as she has never before experienced, and from that moment a fountain of deep and tender emotion is opened, which never ceases to flow while life continues, for it is increased by all the contact, labor and self-denial of subsequent years, with their results of good in the child. Indeed, this becomes the master passion of her nature, and for the defence and happiness of her children, she will sacrifice every personal blessing which earth can afford. Hence God himself appeals to this all-engrossing and imperishable love, as an illustration of his love for Zion, in the well known passage commencing with the words, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" The use, also, which Solomon made of maternal love in deciding to

whom a disputed child belonged, will occur at once to every mind.

The instinctive love of the lower animals for their offspring ceases when the latter have arrived at maturity. The lioness cares not for her cub when it has become a full grown lion. The female bird, that will try every possible art and display the most surprising courage to conceal and protect her brood, deserts them when they can provide for themselves. Not so does maternal love expire in the human breast. A mother's eye never loses sight of a child when manhood or womanhood is reached; a mother's heart never ceases to rejoice in the prosperity and to sorrow in the afflictions of her children. Let the man of middle age come to honor, and it may be said to him then, as truly as in the days of his childhood, in the language of Solomon, "Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bore thee shall rejoice." Let him fall into sin and dishonor, and the bowed head of his gray-haired mother will proclaim how intensely SHE feels it, who a half century before gave birth to him in mingled joy and agony; for as the wise man observed, "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother"—"a grief to his father and bitterness to her that bore him."

"Sweet is the image of the brooding dove!
Holy as heaven, a mother's tender love—
The love of many prayers and many tears,
Which changes not with dim, declining years."

And this affection is returned, though in a weaker degree, by the child. The first and strongest affection of our nature is given to our mother, whose loving face hangs over our infancy, and to whose arms we leap with joy from all other embrace. This natural clinging to the mother does indeed, in a few years, become less close, especially with boys, and during youth there is often an abatement of filial affection, particularly in cases where restraint is unwelcome. But as soon as reason regains her sway, parental claims are more respected than ever, and the word MOTHER thrills on the ear with more than wonted power. Every noble nature is highly susceptible of this filial regard, and we instinctively honor the young man whose attention is lavished upon his mother, and to whom her word is law now as in younger days. It is one of the most touching traits in our Savior's character, that eminent as was his station, many and sorrowful his trials, he was ever thoughtful of her who, in virgin purity, bore him; so that in the hour of his agony, as he hung upon the cross, at whose foot stood the weeping Mary, he tenderly committed her to the protection of the beloved disciple, saying to her, "Behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother!" And who does not admire the respect with which Solomon, at the time the most illustrious and powerful sovereign in the world, treated his mother, when she came be-

fore his throne to make a request? “And the king rose up to meet her and bowed himself unto her and sat down on his throne and caused a seat to be set for the king’s mother; and she sat on his right hand.” Who does not detect the swelling of filial love in the royal heart, as in persuasive tones he encourages her to speak, saying, “Ask on, my mother; for I will not say thee nay?” And if we turn to the delightful verses of Cowper—all of which deserve to become “household words,” so replete are they with purity of imagination and refinement of feeling, and so full of domestic pictures—which of them strikes a more responsive chord, than those lines upon the reception of his departed mother’s portrait, which the coldest temperament can scarce peruse without tears? How his grateful memory ran back over the scenes of childhood, as he spake of the home that was for a brief time their own.

“Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit or confectionery plumb;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
By thine own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed;

All this, still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honors to thee as my numbers may ;
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here."

It is only the most hardened and debased heart, if any, that extinguishes this love for a mother. Long years of crime cannot efface the remembrance of the sweet voice which spake of God, and truth, and right, in the ear of childhood. You may go into the largest prison, and select the most desperate character within its cells of guilt and shame—the wretch who has murdered his fellow-man and blasphemed his God, and who meets all accusations and reproaches with stern defiance and brazen scorn—and you shall take his hand and talk with him of his boyhood and early home, and ask him whether he remembers his mother, and the deep-drawn sigh, followed by the trickling tear, will convince you, that in that callous soul one tender spot remains, in which lies buried the memory of a mother's love. And how often has this single and last cord sufficed to draw the victim of sin back to virtue, as he has been led to hope that he might yet become what his mother had thought to see him, or at least might be prepared to meet her in a world of purity above. How often the first step in vice and crime has been arrested, when just about to be taken,

by the sudden recollection of a mother's hopes and prayers and tears. Yes, God made the mother to be loved, and as He implanted in her heart an intense yearning over her children, that *storge* of which the Greek classical writers make such frequent mention, so has he placed among the nobler instincts of our nature, an answering filial affection.

Hence, it follows, thirdly, that there is a PECULIAR GRIEF OCCASIONED BY A MOTHER'S DEATH. No two afflictions are precisely alike, for they assail different interests and different classes of affections. The grief occasioned by the loss of property or the defeat of an important enterprise, is not the same as that which results from the death of a relative or friend. And so the death of an infant is felt in another manner from that of an adult son or daughter, while we mourn the loss of a husband or wife as we do not that of a child. As peculiar links bind us to each class of relatives, so our sorrow at their death assumes varied types. Where a beloved mother is removed by death, the heart is wounded in a part of exquisite tenderness. Our grief is at once deep and gentle. We feel that a thousand little tendrils of affection that fastened upon our mother, have been suddenly and rudely torn asunder. We seem to bleed as from a multitude of wounds. With the love which we cherish for a father is mingled much of that awe,

reverence and submission, which create something of distance; but the MOTHER lies in the closest proximity to the heart, and when she is taken, we feel specially deserted and sorrowful. This is the view of the Psalmist in the text, who uses the grief felt at the death of a mother, as a strong and somewhat hyperbolic illustration of the sorrow which he had benevolently exhibited for the calamities of those who had subsequently repaid him with the grossest malignity. "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into my own bosom. I behaved myself as though it (he) had been my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his MOTHER."

When a MOTHER is removed, it seems as though we buried with her no small portion of our own, and of the family life. Who so well acquainted as she, with the numberless little interesting particulars of our childhood? Who else can tell us all we wish to know of the early days of our brothers and sisters? Who but she can describe what our father was in his youthful days, and during his first labors and trials? Her memory was the family record, and she the historian whom all loved to consult. And now she is gone, we have parted, as it were, with whole years of life. There is no one left with whom to go lovingly

over the past, searching out the forgotten incidents, and renewing former experience. No; henceforward we consign it all to oblivion.

And then how poor we feel, when sensible that we are no longer the objects of the peculiar love of a MOTHER. Ah! now we begin to prize a mother's affection, a mother's prayers, counsels, and tears! We rise above the gross materialism of our daily pursuits, and bethink us, that love is of more value than gold; and that it were better to have the wealth of a mother's pure, generous, disinterested affection, than to possess all the treasures of California. We contrast her undying regard with the flimsy friendships of ordinary associates, and realize that it is a sad thing to be left in this cold world without a mother's heart to feel for us.

And then comes the crowning element of wo, that a MOTHER can never be replaced, that we have met with a loss which can never be made good. When parents part with a child, though the pang be severe, there is the knowledge that other children remain to cheer their home, or that God may send a like precious gift in its place. When the young man parts from his chosen companion, and with untold anguish lays the precious body in the tomb, though he seems to bury the hopes of life, we know that time will assuage grief, and that another gentle soul, full of

sympathy and love, may become one with his own, and be to him all that is implied in the precious name of wife. BUT WE CAN HAVE ONLY ONE MOTHER. The tie is a blood tie, peculiar and alone. We can be born into the world but once, and of all the loving hearts of womankind that throng the earth, but one can know and feel that we are her offspring. Hence we grieve with special sorrow, when Death snatches away what earthly life can never replace. We say to ourselves, again and again, as we strive to realize the sad event, "Can it be that we have no MOTHER? that that sacred word can never be addressed again to one who shall sustain the endeared relation? that hereafter we are to look back to the enjoyment of maternal love, as to a past blessing?" Even the child, with the mere half-knowledge of boyhood, or girlhood, has an intuitive sense of a great and irreparable loss, when a mother is taken away. How touchingly Cowper adverts to such grief:

"My Mother! when I learned that thou wast dead,
 Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
 Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
 Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
 Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
 Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss."

There may, indeed, be for a young child the outward attention from another which his mother would

give—all that the word duty implies may be faithfully done for him; but the gush and yearning of a mother's heart, that may not be had, for it cannot be the creature of volition; it must have for its source the consciousness that the very life of the child is derived from its own. And, therefore, when we bury our MOTHER, and especially when we do it in our adult years, we do it with a special burden of sorrow, and the spot where she is laid becomes sacred above all other ground.

Perhaps you have wondered, my dear people, that I should have selected such a subject as this, as a theme of discourse to-day. I have done so, guided by the safe principle that the pen should follow the heart, and that the preacher will best interest his people, by allowing the overflow of his soul to stream through his lips. Sudden tidings of the almost instant death of my beloved mother,* reached me on Monday last, and the thoughts of the week have naturally shaped themselves into this sermon. You were strangers to her person and her worth, and it were, therefore, inappropriate for me to dwell, in your presence, upon the features of her life. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," and I shall parade neither the fact nor the reason of my filial grief before

* MRS. MARY WESTON PATTON, wife of Rev. William Patton, D. D., of New York city, who died at Stonington, Ct., July 25, 1857.

the public. Suffice it, that she was my MOTHER, the faithful, loving wife of my father, the parent of all his children, the partner, from the beginning, of his labors, the sharer of his successes, the comforter of his sorrows; that she was, from an early period of her life, a disciple of JESUS CHRIST, at first taking a stand as such alone in her immediate circle, and never ceasing from her love of the Savior and of his people, till she was called to the prepared mansion; and that my own earliest associations and memories are connected with the instructions of her who taught me my very letters from the Bible, and who has followed me through life, with the love which a mother bears her eldest, living son. Often she pleaded with me for Christ, in the days of my sin, and it was with the joy of one who has brought her son to a second birth, that she hailed my conversion. And to-day do I seem to see the tears of holy joy, which gathered in her eye and trickled down her cheek, when first, as a licensed candidate for the ministry, I stood up, in my father's pulpit, to preach the gospel of the Son of God. Subsequently she became (within a few years), a member of the church to which I ministered in Hartford, Conn., and with mingled Christian and maternal pleasure, heard the Truth from the lips of her son, and received the emblems of Jesus' death from his hands. It was not my privilege

to see her in death, nor to lay her remains in the bosom of God's earth—the act by which I turned my back on my former home to come and serve the Master here, took me forever, in this world, from the sight of that dear face. But I believe in GOD; I have confidence in JESUS CHRIST; I have faith in the resurrection of the dead; I know there is a heaven. I shall again see my mother, washed in the blood of the Lamb, purified forever from sin, and clothed eventually with an immortal body, "like to that glorious body" in which her Savior represents redeemed humanity in the upper world; and the meeting that shall then take place shall be eternal!

With this brief reference to the occasion of such a discourse, I pass, in conclusion, to a few practical remarks, which grow out of the subject :

1. Let me urge those who have a mother still living, to give her their highest respect and affection. You will never regret, at a future day, that you did so. Filial love assumes new beauty as years roll away and we look back upon it from the decline of life. Young men, as they advance out of boyhood, often cherish or yield to a miserable, false shame of being subject to a mother's control. They ridicule those who strive to please a pious mother, and think it shows a manly spirit to go contrary to her counsels and entreaties.

“ One angel minister is sent
To guard and guide us to the sky,
And still her sheltering wing is bent,
Till manhood rudely throws it by.
Oh, then with mad disdain we spurn
A mother’s gentle teaching; throw
Her bosom from us, and we burn
To rush in freedom, where the glow
Of pleasure lights the dancing wave —
We launch the bark we woo the gale,
And reckless of the darkling grave
That yawns below, we speed the sail!”

My young friends, believe me when I say, that such conduct is unworthy of a son, and will at a future day torture your soul with cruel remorse. When that dear mother lies cold in death, and you would give all this world’s wealth to recall her to life, then will you remember her kindness and your disobedience, and every act of waywardness will be a dagger to your heart. Be kind to her now, and when she is called away, memory will pour balm into your wounded soul. “Despise not thy mother when she is old,” said the wise man. No, rather let every added day of her life make her dearer to your heart. You will never have any one else to love you with an affection so pure and so lasting. Blessed are they who can have a mother’s voice and smile to cheer them far on in their pilgrimage! Then amid earth’s darkest

disappointments, they can say with one of England's sweetest and saddest female poets :

“Ah, blessed are they, for whom 'mid all their pains,
That faithful and unaltered love remains ;
Who, life wrecked round them, hunted from their rest,
And by all else forsaken or distressed,
Claim in one heart, their sanctuary and shrine,
As I, my mother, claimed my place in thine.”

2. Let me urge those whose mothers have departed, to cherish their memory with special care. Let not the lapse of time obliterate the impression of a mother's faithfulness. Let her voice be ever in your ear, her example ever before your eye. If you are tempted to sin, think of her counsels and prayers, and act as though her eye were now upon you. Let her memory be your guardian angel to shield you in the hour of danger, when worldly allurements are strong and your will is weak. Read the Bible that she gave you, repeat the prayers that you learned from her lips, believe on the Savior in whom she trusted, and determine to win that heaven whither she has gone.

3. Let me entreat mothers so to live, that their influence will be saving and their memory precious. You wish to secure the perpetual love of your children : Oh, see to it, that you act the part of a mother without exception, caring for the soul as well as for the body, and making yourself the author of their

eternal as well as of their mortal life. How blessed are the children who can look back and think of the training which they received from a pious mother! How joyful will be their reünion with her in the heavenly world! What more honorable mention can be made of parents after their death, than to declare that they were disciples of JESUS on earth, and are now numbered among the redeemed in heaven? How truly noble was the tribute which, in a land where men pride themselves upon the rank of their parents and ancestors, Cowper paid to his father and mother, when he said :

“My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth ;
But higher, far, my proud pretensions rise —
The son of parents passed into the skies.”

My hearers, who sustain the relation of a mother, rest not till you are sure of an interest in Christ for yourselves and for your children. Consecrate your own souls to the Savior, and avail yourselves of all appropriate means to sanctify your offspring. Precede their very birth with wrestling supplications; offer them to God in early baptism; make them the subjects of daily secret prayer; pray frequently with them; meet with the other mothers of the congregation for consultation and for petition at the throne of grace; carefully instruct them from the Scriptures;

live religion before them in all its beauty, and strive by every word and act to deepen the impression upon their minds, that your supreme desire in their behalf is, that they should be holy. Then will your prayers be heard and your labors be crowned with success. Your children will "arise up and call you blessed," for your memory will be associated not only with the pleasant things of earth, but with all their hopes of life eternal. And though at your death they will "bow down heavily," as must all who "mourn for a MOTHER," yet will their sorrow be mingled with the joy which anticipates an eternal reünion.

BF

575

G7

P38

1857

Rare

ok 2m







